List of Inventor's Name and Address

Yoshimasa YAMAMOTO, Hadano-shi, JAPAN.

Title of the Invention

POINT SERVICE SYSTEM ON THE NETWORK

Inventor

Yoshimasa YAMAMOTO

- 1 -

POINT SERVICE SYSTEM ON THE NETWORK

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a point service system which provides the points corresponding to a commodity including a service when it is

5 purchased, and more particularly to the point service system which is intended for transactions on a network.

As prior arts on a point service system that is intended for transactions on a network, there has been proposed "Method for issuing service ticket in

10 article transaction using communication line" as disclosed in JP-A-9-245256 and "Point service system for virtual shopping center" disclosed in JP-A-10-78989. The prior art of JP-A-9-245256 is arranged so that the service tickets to be issued by a shop in

15 transactions with a customer through a communication line are managed on each customer's unit and the service tickets of each customer are given back at the next intended transaction in the form of a price cut or a premium. The prior art of JP-A-10-78989 is arranged

20 so that the common points to be issued at a point-issuing rate set for each shop when a virtual shop transacts with a customer are managed on each customer's unit and the payment is cut at the point-giving-back rate set for each shop in the next intended

25 transaction by the customer with the shop.

The prior art disclosed in JP-A-9-245256 has a capability of merely providing a fixed and uniform service. This prior art thus has difficulty in applying itself to a variety of shops run by their

5 respective managers. The prior art disclosed in JP-A-10-78989 is arranged to perform giving-back of the points through the payment cut. This prior art thus has difficulty in coping with an illegal deed or bankruptcy of a specific shop (adjustment).

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a point service system which is arranged to overcome the foregoing difficulties, allow any virtual shop and customer to safely join the system itself and

15 any virtual shop to flexibly and rapidly change a ratio of a service to the corresponding points for prompting sales on the shop's own decision so that the system may cover a variety of shops run by their own managers as its joining member.

20 In order to meet the condition that the virtual shop and a customer can join the system safe and sound, the present invention prepares three means. As a method of giving back the points to a customer, a method of giving back the premium corresponding to the

25 number of points obtained by the customer is adopted in place of the method of cutting the payment in a new transaction. In order to realize this method, the

point service system is provided with a function of
supporting a shop for providing a service (including a
commodity, which holds true to the following term
"service") and the other function of supporting a

5 vendor for providing a premium. Then, the procedure of
giving a qualification to a virtual shop that intends
to join the system on the proper examination and then
distributing a key to the qualified virtual shop is
adopted for the purpose of suppressing the adverse

10 influence taking place in an illegal deed or bankruptcy
of a specific shop. Further, by considering a time
passage, the present point service system provides a
capability of making a term-determined contract with a
virtual shop, storing the transactions data in an

15 inside database as trace information, and determining
the validity of the continuation of the contract on the
stored data.

The point service system according to the
invention has a rule of defining an upper limit and a

20 lower limit of a ratio of a service to the
corresponding points inside the system itself.
According to this rule, the virtual shop enables to
define the number of points at each transaction of a
service or a premium and communicates it to the host

25 computer having the point service system itself. The
point service system hence enables to flexibly and
rapidly change the ratio of a service to the

corresponding points on the virtual shop's own decision.

Moreover, the point service system according to the invention has a capability of storing family

5 information in which a group of customers are treated as a family unit. This capability makes it possible to realize a more convenient point service system. Moreover, the point service system includes a function corresponding to the virtual shop itself so that a firm

10 having no virtual shop as a business base can join the system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing an overall arrangement of a point service system according to the

15 present invention;

Fig. 2 is a view showing essential information managed in a database provided in the point service system of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a view showing essential

20 information stored in the database for operating the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a flowchart showing a procedure of registering a shop as one form of a virtual shop in the

25 point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a flowchart showing a procedure of registering a customer member in the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a flowchart showing a procedure of registering a vendor as one form of a virtual shop in the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a view showing a procedure of processing points in a transaction of a service in the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 8 is a view showing a procedure of processing points in a transaction of a premium in the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 9 is a view showing a main content of a message to be treated by a host of the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 10 is a flowchart showing a procedure of managing a contract term of the point service system according to the present invention with the shop as an example;

Fig. 11 is a flowchart showing a procedure of creating statistical information in the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 12 is a block diagram showing a computer of the host of the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 13 is a block diagram showing a computer of the shop of the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 14 is a block diagram showing a computer 5 of the member of the point service system according to the present invention;

Fig. 15 is a block diagram showing a computer of the vendor of the point service system according to the present invention;

10 Fig. 16 is a block diagram showing an overall arrangement of a point service system according to another embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 17 is a view showing an example of a Web screen provided by the point service system according 15 to the present invention;

Fig. 18 is a view showing one example of a business flow at a preliminary stage of the point service system according to the present invention; and

Fig. 19 is a view showing one example of a 20 business flow at a promoting stage of the point service system according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Fig. 1 shows an overall arrangement of a point service system according to an embodiment of the 25 present invention.

The point service system is arranged to have a computer 3 (referred to as a shop) in which provided

is a virtual shop for providing a service and the
corresponding points thereto to a customer, a computer
5 (referred to as a vendor) in which provided is a
virtual shop where a customer can purchase a premium
5   using his or her points, a computer 4 to be used by a
customer (also referred to as a member) who purchases a
premium in the vendor by consuming the points, a host
computer 1 that has the point service system itself for
providing point services, and a network 2 to be
10 connected if necessary, such as the internet.

        Then, the description will be oriented to the
arrangement of a computer in which the point service
system is operated. As shown in Fig. 12, the computer
of the host 1 is arranged to have a database 17
15 (referred to as a DB) for storing information necessary
to the point service, a CPU 101 that enables the point
service host program for performing the point service
to be operated through the use of the DB 17, and a
network connecting mechanism 102 for connecting to
20 another computer through the network. The shop
computer 3 is, as shown in Fig. 13, arranged to have a
CPU 111 that enables the client program for a shop to
be operated and a network connecting mechanism 112 to
be connected with another computer through a network,
25 the client program for a shop serving to communicate
information on a service transaction to the host 1 of
the point service point system when a service
transaction with the customer takes place. Likewise,

the vendor computer 5 is, as shown in Fig. 15, arranged
to have a CPU 131 for enabling a client program for a
vendor to be operated and a network connecting
mechanism 132 to be connected with another computer

5 through a network, the client program for a vendor
serving to communicate information on a premium
transaction to the host 1 of the point service system
when a premium transaction with the customer takes
place. Further, the member computer 4 is, as shown in

10 Fig. 14, arranged to have a CPU 121 for enabling a
program for accessing a WEB to be operated and a
network connecting mechanism 122 to be connected with
another computer through a network, the program for
accessing a WEB serving to access the host 1 of the

15 point service system. The network connecting
mechanisms 102, 112, 122 and 133 that are all
components of the point service system provide means
for encrypting communication information for protecting
that from malignant intruders.

20   In turn, the description will be oriented to
the function of the point service host program that is
operated on the host 1 of the point service system with
reference to Fig. 1.

          The host 1 includes a shop support unit 11

25 for making the information to be stored in the host
open to the shop 3, a shop registration unit 12 for
examining and registering a shop and a service to be

treated by the shop, a member support unit 13 for making the information to be stored in the host open to the member 4, a member registration unit 14 for examining and registering a member, a vendor support

5 unit 15 for making the information to be stored in the host open to the vendor 5, a vendor registration unit 16 for examining and registering a vendor and a premium to be treated by the vendor, a database unit 17 for storing information required for the point service, and

10 a DB managing unit 18 for referring to and updating the DB.

Fig. 16 shows an overall arrangement of another embodiment of the point service system that includes in the point service system a shop (agency) 19

15 corresponding to a shop 3 and a vendor (agency) 20 corresponding to the vendor 5 and serves to exchange information on a service transaction and information on a premium transaction through inter-program communicating means inside the host 1 without through

20 the network 2.

Next, the essential information to be managed by the DB for the point service is shown in Fig. 2.

The list of the shops shown in (a) of Fig. 2 includes an ID by which the host identifies each shop,

25 a key given by the host to each shop, a contract term between the host and each shop, an ID of each service given by the shop, a name of the service, the number of points provided to the customer when the service is

purchased, a service-providing term and the remaining
number of the service, a point effective term when
provision of the points to the service is guaranteed,
and a message by which the shop appeals to the member.

5   The list of the vendor shown in (b) of Fig. 2 includes
an ID by which the host identifies the vendor, a key
given by the host to the vendor, a term of contract
with the vendor, an ID of each premium provided by the
vendor, a name of the premium, the number of points

10   consumed by the customer for the premium by the
customer, a premium-providing term and the remaining
number of the premium, a point effective term when
provision of the number of points required for the
premium is guaranteed, and a message by which the

15   vendor appeals to the member. The list of the member
shown in (c) of Fig. 2 includes an ID by which the host
identifies each member, a key given by the host to the
member, a term of contract with each member, the number
of accumulated points of each member, information for

20   discriminating whether or not the member belongs to a
specific family, and information for identifying the
family. The list of the family shown in (d) of Fig. 2
includes an ID by which the host identifies the family,
the number of the members composing each family, the

25   number of accumulated points which is the sum of the
points of all members of the family, information for
determining in the family a boss member who occupies a
right of exchanging a premium with the points obtained

by the family, and an ID of the boss member.

Then, the essential information to operating the system, stored on the DB, is shown in Fig. 3.

The point using rule for a shop shown in (a) of Fig. 3 includes a service price range, a lower limit value and an upper limit value of the point number corresponding to the service price range, an upper limit value of the bonus point in which the service can be provided with points more than the upper limit value within a certain term for sales, and a term when the bonus points are effective. The point using rule for a vendor shown in (b) of Fig. 3 includes a price range of a premium, a premium price range, a lower limit value and an upper limit value of the point number corresponding to the price range, a lower limit value of the bonus points in which each premium can be provided with points less than the lower limit value within a certain term for sales, and a term when the bonus points are effective. The expiration noticing rules for a shop/vendor/member shown in (c) to (e) of Fig. 3 each include one or more expiration noticing times for specifying a time when the contract update time is coming close and one or more notice suppressing conditions for suppressing the expiration notice. The trace information for transactions shown in (f) of Fig. 3 includes a date and time of each transaction taking place between the system and a shop/vendor/member, an unique transaction number specified for each

transaction, a type of transaction, an ID of a member
who performs a transaction, and a key thereof. The
point service using information of a shop/vendor/
member/family shown in (g) to (j) of Fig. 3 includes an
5 information for identifying a shop/vendor/member/
family, a total number of transactions, a total number
of treating the points, and a first and a last
transaction dates.

In succession, the description will be
10 oriented to the procedure of registering a shop, a
member and a vendor.

At first, the summary of the procedure of
registering a shop, which is performed in the shop
registering unit 12, will be described with reference
15 to the flowchart shown in Fig. 4.

When the shop 3 makes access to the shop
registering unit 12, the unit requests the name of a
shop or a firm of the shop 3 (201). Then, the
operation is executed to compare the inputted name of
20 the shop or firm with the ID of the shop listed in the
DB 17 and determine if it has been already registered
on the compared result (202). If it is not registered
in the shop list, the request for the necessary
examination information to registration is given to the
25 shop 3 (203). Then, the examination information is
read and the operation is temporarily finished (204).
If no problem takes place as a result of performing a

manual examination, a key is sent. If it is registered
in the shop list, an operation is executed to request
the shop 3 to input the key (205). Then, the inputted
key is collated to the registered key in the shop list

5   (206). If the keys are not matched, the operation is
finished (207) and then the fact is recorded in a log.
The collation of the keys may be retried several times.
If the keys are matched to each other, the operation is
executed to request the shop 3 to input a contract type

10   (208). It is determined if the contract is new (209).
If it is not new, the operation is executed to extend
the contract and update the service information
provided by the shop 3 for updating the content of the
shop list stored in the DB 17 (210), and then the

15   operation is finished (211). If it is new, the
operation is executed to determine if it is an agency
contract that entrusts the sales to the host 1 (212).
If it is not the agency contract, the operation is
executed to make a contract of joining a member of the

20   point service, receive the necessary information to the
shop list stored in the DB 17, and add it to the shop
list (213) so that the client program for a shop can be
downloaded, and then the operation is finished (214).
The client program for a shop may be provided through a

25   recording medium such as a floppy disk or a CD-ROM. If
it is the agency contract, the operation is executed to
make an agency contract of a service, receive the
necessary information to the shop list in the DB 17,

and add it to the shop list (215), and then the

operation is finished. Next, the shop (agency) is

manually registered in the host 1 (216). The shop

support unit 11 provides an interface by which the shop

5 3 have a conversation with the shop registering unit 12

and another interface by which part of the information

stored in the DB 17 is referred by the shop 3.

Turning to the flowchart of Fig. 5, the

summary of the procedure of registering a member,

10 performed by the member registering unit 14, will be

described.

When a member 4 makes access to the member

registering unit 14, the member registering unit 14

requests an individual or body name of member 4 (401).

15 The inputted individual or body name is compared with a

member ID in the member list stored in the DB 17 for

determining if it has been already registered (402).

If it is not registered in the member list, the

operation is executed to request the necessary

20 examination information to the registration of the

member 4 (403), and read the examination information,

and then the operation is temporarily finished (404).

If no problem takes place as a result of performing the

manual examination, a key is sent to the member 4. If

25 it has been already registered in the member list, the

member 4 is requested to input the key (405). Then,

the inputted key is collated to the key registered in

the member list (406). If the keys are not matched,

the operation is finished (407) and the fact is

recorded. The collation of the keys may be retired

several times. If the keys are matched, the operation

is executed to request the member 4 to input a contract

5 type (408), for determining if it is a new contract

(409). If it is not new, the operation is executed to

update the contract content for updating the content of

the member list stored in the DB 17 (410), and then the

operation is finished (411). If it is a new contract,

10 it is determined if the contract is a family one (412).

If it is not a family contract, the operation is

executed to make an individual contract for the point

service, receive the necessary information, and add it

to the member list stored in the DB 17 (413), and then

15 the operation is finished (414). If it is a family

contract, the operation is executed to make a family

contract, receive the necessary information, and add it

to the member list and the family list stored in the DB

17 (415), and then the operation is finished (416).

20 The member support unit 13 provides an interface by

which the member 4 has a conversation with the member

registering unit 14 and another interface by which part

of the information stored in the DB 17 is referred by

the member 4.

25   Turning to the flowchart of Fig. 6, the

description will be oriented to a summary of the

procedure of registering a vendor, performed by the

vendor registering unit 16.

When the vendor 5 makes access to the vendor

registering unit 16, the operation is executed to

request the name of the shop or firm of the vendor 5

(601). The inputted name of the shop or firm is

5 compared with each vendor ID in the vendor list stored

in the DB 17 for determining if it has been already

registered in the vendor list (602). If it is not

registered in the vendor list, the operation is

executed to request the necessary examination

10 information to the registration from the vendor 5

(603), and read it, and then the operation is

temporarily finished (604). If no problem takes place

as a result of the manual examination, a key is sent to

the vendor 5. If it has been already registered in the

15 vendor list, the operation is executed to request the

vendor 5 to input the key (605). The inputted key is

collated to each key registered in the vendor list

(606). If the keys are not matched, the operation is

finished (607) and then the fact is recorded in a log.

20 The collation of the keys may be retried several times.

If the keys are matched, the operation is executed to

request the vendor 5 to input a contract type (608),

for determining if it is a new contract (609). If it

is not new, the operation is executed to extend the

25 contract and update the premium information provided by

the vendor 5 for updating the content of the list of

the vendor 5 stored in the DB 17 (610), and then the

operation is finished (611). If it is new, the

operation is executed to determine if it is an agency

contract that entrusts a sale to the host 1 (612), if

it is not an agency contract, the operation is executed

to make a contract of providing a premium, receive the

5 necessary information to the list of the vendor 5

stored in the DB 17 and add it to the list (613) so

that the client program for a vendor may be downloaded.

Then, the operation is finished (614). The client

program for a vendor can be provided through a

10 recording medium such as a floppy disk or a CD-ROM. If

it is an agency contract, the operation is executed to

make an agency contract for providing a premium,

receive the necessary information to the vendor list in

the DB 17, and add it to the list (615). Then, the

15 operation is finished. Next, the vendor (agency) is

manually registered on the host 1 (616). The vendor

support unit 15 provides an interface by which the

vendor 5 has a conversation with the vendor registering

unit 16 and another interface by which part of the

20 information stored in the DB 17 is referred by the

vendor 5.

In succession, the description will be

oriented to the information exchange between the

registered shop/member/vendor and the host of the point

25 service system.

At first, the procedure of handling points in

association with the service transactions will be

described with reference to Fig. 7. In the following
description, the host 1 is titled as ABC and the member
4 who joins the host 1 is called a ABC member.
Moreover, the shown shop 3 may be a virtual shop

5 outside the host (affiliated shop) or a virtual shop
inside the host (agency). When the member 4 purchases
a specific service in the shop 3 (1), if the service is
registered in the ABC, the shop 3 requests a key having
been given from the ABC of the member 4 (2), creates

10 information on the service transaction including the
key (3) sent from the member 4 and the number of points
to be supplied according to the purchased service, and
notify the host 1 of the ABC of the information (4).
The essential content of the information on the service

15 transaction is listed in (a) of Fig. 9. The shop
support unit 11 of the host 1 refers to the DB 17 for
checking the key collation and the contract status of
the member/shop by using the member list and the shop
list included in the DB 17 and the validity of the

20 number of points by using the point using rule for the
shop (5). If no problem is found, the number of points
supplied for this time is added to the number of points
of the member in the DB 17 for updating it (6) and then
the check information is sent to the shop 3 (7). If a

25 problem is found on the key collation of the
member/shop, the contract status check or the validity
of the number of points, the check information for
indicating the fact is sent to the shop 3. In response

to the check information for indicating no problem is found, the shop 3 notifies the member 4 of the fact that the shop 3 start dealings with the member 4 (8). At a time, the shop 3 reports the information

5 containing the number of points to be supplied for this time to the member 4 through the member support unit 13 of the host 1 (9). The essential content of the report on the points in association with the service transaction is listed in (b) of Fig. 9.

10 If a problem is found on the service purchased from the shop 3 joining the ABC, the member 4 notifies the host 1 of the claim information containing the information on the member/shop/service (10). The essential content of the claim information is listed in

15 (c) of Fig. 9. The member support unit 13 of the host 1 serves to refer to the DB 17 for checking the information on the transaction between the member and the shop and then send the check information to the member 4 (11).

20 If such a problem as no payment to the service by the member 4 though the points are supplied to the member 4 joining the ABC, the shop 3 notifies the host 1 of the information on the service stop containing the information on the member/shop/service

25 (12). The essential content of the information on the service stop is listed in (d) of Fig. 9. The shop support unit 11 of the host 1 serves to refer to the DB 17 for checking the information on the transaction

between the member and the shop, perform a process of

returning the points to the member listed in the DB 17

(13), and send the check information to the shop 3

(14). At a time, the shop support unit 11 reports the

5   information containing the number of returned points of

this time to the member 4 through the member support

unit 13 of the host 1 (15). The essential content of

the point report in association with the information on

the service stop is listed in (e) of Fig. 9.

10   Turning to Fig. 8, the procedure of handling

the points in association with the transactions of the

premiums. The vendor 5 shown in Fig. 8 may be a

virtual shop outside the host (affiliated shop) or a

virtual shop inside the host (premium section). When

15   the member 4 purchases a specific premium in the vendor

5 (1), if the premium is registered in the ABC, the

vendor 5 requests of the member 4 a key having been

given by the ABC (2), creates the information on the

premium transaction containing the number of points

20   consumed by the member 4 in purchasing the premium, and

reports the information to the host 1 of the ABC (4).

The essential content of the information on the premium

transaction is listed in (f) of Fig. 9. The vendor

support unit 15 of the host 1 serves to refer to the DB

25   17 for checking a key collation, a contract status, a

number of points of a member/family by using the member

list, the vendor list and the family list in the DB 17

as well as the validity of the number of points by

using the point using rule for the vendor (5). If no

problem is found, the number of consumed points of this

time is subtracted from the number of points of the

member in the DB 17 for updating the content in the DB

5   17 (6). Then, the vendor support unit 15 sends the

check information to the vendor 5 (7). Herein, if a

family attribute is listed in the member list 4, the

total number of points of the family is to be checked.

If a problem is found on the key collation of the

10 member/vendor, the contract status check, and the

validity of the number of points also in the case that

the boss member is specified and another member rather

than the boss member issues a request for exchanging

the premium, the check information on that is sent to

15 the vendor 5. In response to the check information for

indicating no problem, the vendor 5 notifies the member

4 of the fact that the vendor 5 enters into dealings

with the member 4 (8). At a time, the vendor 5 reports

the information including the number of consumed points

20 of this time to the member 4 through the member support

unit 13 of the host 1 (9). The essential content of

the point report in association with the transaction on

the premium is listed in (g) of Fig. 9. If a problem

takes place on the premium purchased from the vendor 5

25 joining the ABC, the member 4 notifies the host 1 of

the claim information containing the information on the

member/vendor/premium (10). The member support unit 13

of the host 1 serves to refer to the DB 17 for checking

the information on the transaction between the member
and the vendor and then send the check information to
the member 4 (11).

The exchange of the information between the
5   shop/member/vendor and the host of the point service
system is accumulatively recorded as the trace
information on the transactions in the DB 17 in which
trace information the date and time, the serial number
and the type of each transaction are added at each
10   exchange of information by means of the shop support
unit 11, the member support unit 13 and the vendor
support unit 15.

One example of the Web screen supplied to the
member 4 by the host 1 of the point service system is
15   shown in Fig. 17.

In succession, the summary of the management
on the term of contract that is one of the functions of
the DB managing unit 18 will be described with
reference to the flowchart of Fig. 10 with the shop as
20   an example. In the DB management unit 18, the
procedure of the management on the term of contract is
carried out for the shop list, the vendor list and the
member list stored in the DB 17 once a day when a new
day comes.

25   The procedure of the management on the term
of contract of the shop is executed to sequentially
refer to the shop list stored in the DB 17 (701), if
the contract term of the shop 3 is expired on the

execution day (702), delete the information of the shop

3 from the shop list, and record it in a log, and is

finished and shifts to the next process for the shop

(704). If the contract term of the shop 3 is not

5   expired, the procedure is executed to refer to a

contract term expiration notice rule for the shop

(705), unless it conforms to one or more notice times

(for example, ten days before the contract due date)

(706), and is finished and shifts to the next process

10 for the shop (707). If it conforms to one of the

notice times (for example, ten days before the contract

due date), the procedure is executed to refer to the

trace information (708). If the current case conforms

to one or more notice suppressing conditions (for

15 example, zero transaction within the term of contract,

100 or more claims from the members within the term of

contract) of the contract term expiration notice rule

for the shop (709), it is recorded in a log and then

the procedure is finished and then shifts to the next

20 process for the shop (710). Unless it conforms to one

of the notice suppressing conditions, the update of the

contract is guided through the shop support unit 11

(711). Then, the procedure is finished and then shifts

to the next process for the shop (712). At this stage,

25 in the case that the contract term is expired in one or

more members when the procedure of the management on

the term of contract of all the members is finished, if

the member has a family attribute and the contract

terms of all the members belonging to the family are expired, the family information is deleted from the family list.

In succession, the summary of the procedure

5 of creating the statistical information that is one of the functions of the DB managing unit 18 will be described with reference to the flowchart of Fig. 11. Herein, the description will be oriented to the procedure in which the DB managing unit 18 creates the

10 statistical information once a month when a new month comes.

The procedure of creating the statistical information is executed to refer to the trace information on the transactions stored in the DB 17

15 (801) and, if there is not a new transaction after the one previous time of creating the statistical information (802), record the fact in the log and then is finished (803). If one or more transactions are found, the procedure is executed to refer to the member

20 list in the DB 17 (804) and, if there is any service transaction of the member 4, (805), update the point service using information of the member including the total number of transactions, the total number of obtained points, the date of the initial transaction,

25 and the data of the last transaction (806). If the member 4 has a family attribute, the procedure is executed to update the point service using information of the family including the total number of

transactions of the subject family, the total number of

obtained points thereof, the date of the initial

transaction thereof, and the date of the last

transaction thereof. At a time, the procedure is also

5   executed to update the point service using information

of the shop 3 that has dealings with the member 4

including the total number of transactions of that shop

3, the total number of obtained points thereof, the

date of the initial transaction thereof, and the date

10 of the last transaction thereof (807). Next, if the

premium transaction of the member 4 takes place (808),

the procedure is executed to update the point service

using information of the member 4 including the total

number of transactions of the member 4, the total

15 number of consumed cases thereof, the date of the

initial transaction thereof, and the date of the last

transaction thereof (809). If the member 4 has a

family attribute, likewise, the procedure is executed

to update the point service using information of the

20 family including the total number of transactions of

the family, the total number of consumed cases thereof,

the date of the initial transaction thereof, and the

date of the last transaction thereof.

Also, the vendor point service using

25 information is updated (810), which information

includes the total number of transactions of the vendor

5 that has service dealings with the member 4, the

total number of supplied points thereof, the date of

the initial transaction, and the date of the last

transaction. The foregoing process is repeated for all

the members 4 on the member list and then the procedure

is finished (811). The foregoing description is

5   exemplary. The DB managing unit 18 serves to create

two or more point service using statuses such as a

monthly status, an annual status, and a total status.

At last, one example of a business flow of

the present point service system will be described

10   below with reference to Figs. 18 and 19.

Fig. 18 shows a business flow at the

preliminary stage of a business in the point service

system (ABC) according to the present invention. The

system host 1 supplies a program for a client and

15   obtains a registration fee as its price when the host 1

makes a new contract with the shop 3 or the vendor 5.

Further, the connecting service fee is also obtained

from the shop 3, the member 4 and the vendor 5. The

connecting service for the member 4 may be free. The

20   contract is flexibly promoted. Concretely, the

contract is basically on the annual base, in which the

connecting service fee is monthly. The registration

fee and the connecting service fee are specified as the

fixed cost of the system host 1. The shop 3 prepares

25   and registers the service and purchases from the system

host 1 the points corresponding to the cost and the

quantity of the services to be purchased by the member

4 of the ABC. For the shop 3 and the vendor 5, the

registration fee/connecting service fee correspond to
the advertisement fee. The cost required by the shop
to purchase the points corresponds to the discount of
the service.

5   Fig. 19 shows a business flow at the stage of
promoting a business in the point service system
according to the present invention. When a service
transaction is set up between the shop 3 and the member
4, the points possessed by the shop 3 are shifted to

10   the member 4. When a premium transaction is set up
between the member 4 and the vendor 5, the points
possessed by the member 4 are shifted to the vendor 5.
The vendor 5 pays the difference from/to the system
host 1 on the points obtained by the premium

15   transaction with the member 4 and thereby recovers the
cost of the premium once a month.

           The difference between the total amount of
the point fee obtained from the shop 3 and the point
fee to be paid to the vendor 5 is expected to be

20   allocated to the variation cost of the system host 1
and the sales benefit. Hence, the point fee of the
shop 3 is different from that of the vendor 5.

           In the foregoing description, the embodiments
of the present invention have been described in detail.

25   The present invention is not limited to these
embodiments. It may be embodied in other specific
forms without departing from the spirit of the
invention.

The point service system according to the invention employs a system of separating the virtual shops joining the system into the shop for supplying the customer with the service and the vendor for

5 supplying the customer with the premium, which is served as means of giving-back the points. Hence, the point service system does not need any adjustment among the virtual shops joining the system. Further, the point service system employs a system of summing the

10 transactions between the virtual shops and the members on the basis of the number of points supplied/points consumed on the member basis notified from the virtual shop, so that the transaction between the virtual shop and the member is made more independent of the point

15 service to be given to the member. The use of the foregoing two systems makes it possible to reduce the adverse effect of an illegal act or bankruptcy of a specific virtual shop on another virtual shop or the point service system itself to a minimum, resulting in

20 allowing a variety of shops run by respective managers to safely join the point service system.

In turn, the virtual shop/customer who wants to join/take part in the point service system are examined before registration, the prompt contract is

25 made, and the contract update guide is suppressed by considering the trace information on the transactions between the virtual shop and the customer. These effects make it possible to exclude the undesirable

virtual shop/customer from the point service system and stably introduce the desirable customers to the excellent virtual shops.

Further, the point service system prepares a

5 rule containing an upper limit and a lower limit of the number of points corresponding to the price range of the service/premium. The virtual shop allows the number of points to be flexibly and swiftly changed within the price range. The virtual shop enables to

10 utilize this function for sales to be strategically and dynamically expanded. Hence, the present point service system allows the virtual shops joining the system itself to be competitive.

In addition, the point service system

15 prepares the family attribute for each customer, in which family attribute a group of customers uses one purse, so that the points obtained by all the members of the family can be used by any member of the family and the points obtained by all the members of the

20 family can be used by a specific member of the family. This is highly convenient for each customer.

The point service system is arranged to provide the function corresponding to the virtual shop and allow the firm having no virtual shop as its

25 business base to join the system itself. This arrangement makes a great contribution to the economic activity.